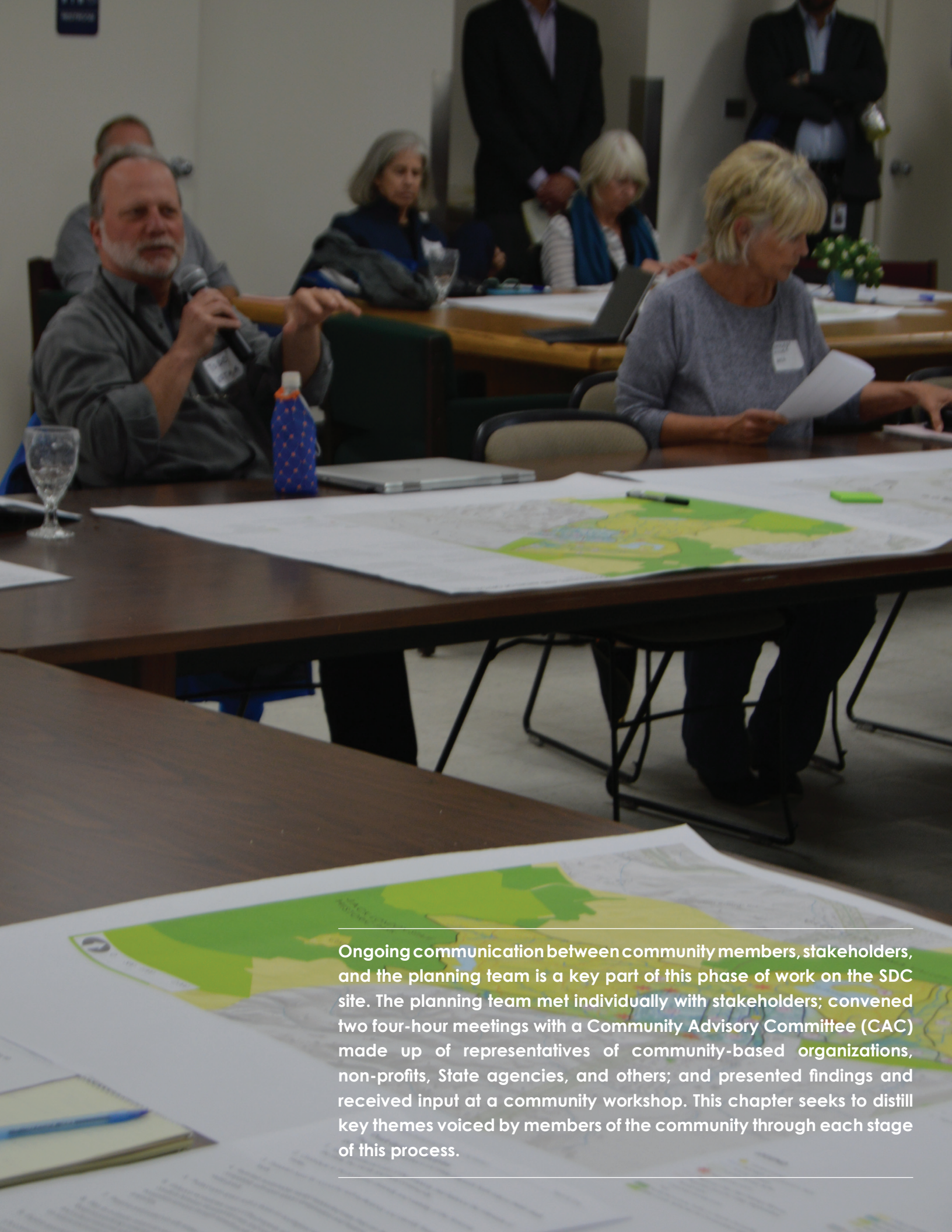


3. COMMUNITY VOICE





Ongoing communication between community members, stakeholders, and the planning team is a key part of this phase of work on the SDC site. The planning team met individually with stakeholders; convened two four-hour meetings with a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) made up of representatives of community-based organizations, non-profits, State agencies, and others; and presented findings and received input at a community workshop. This chapter seeks to distill key themes voiced by members of the community through each stage of this process.

3.1 Stakeholder Interviews

Consultants met with stakeholders one-on-one and in small groups during the summer of 2017, gaining valuable understanding of site conditions, interested organizations, and priorities and concerns.

KEY FINDINGS FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS (SUMMER 2017)

Foundational Recurring Themes: Interests and Values

The following five Foundational Themes represent a synthesis of responses from stakeholders when asked about their interests and what they value about SDC and its surroundings.

Protection of SDC Land and Water.

All interview participants identified natural resources protection, open space access and scenic values as key interests. Participants spoke about the importance of protecting SDC’s undeveloped lands, including accommodating public access in some areas and also protecting the wildlife corridor. Others emphasized water resources protection and groundwater recharge potential. There was broad agreement that future uses should not negatively impact the open space and ecological values of SDC.

Preservation of a “Legacy of Care.”

All interview participants characterized SDC as a unique and special place. Several described how its history of care for people with disabilities has created the fabric of an “altruistic” and “caring”

community. Several participants expressed a desire to maintain specialized services on site for the Developmentally Disabled, particularly an acute mental health crisis facility. Others suggested a broader range of future uses that benefit from this culture and honor SDC’s legacy.

Community Character and Historic Preservation.

Participants expressed that SDC plays a central role in the community’s character and rural quality of life. Many described the importance of preserving the serenity of SDC and maintaining the look and feel of Arnold Drive. Several expressed how SDC/ Eldridge and Glen Ellen are “twin” communities and anything that occurs at SDC should be compatible with Glen Ellen. Participants acknowledged the rich and varied history of SDC and expressed an interest in preserving its historical and cultural resources. Some expressed the desire to tell the story of SDC in a meaningful way by conveying the history—or living history—of the treatment of people with disabilities and differences in society. Several emphasized SDC’s self-reliant and agrarian history and expressed an interest in showcasing agriculture in SDC’s future uses.

Contribution to Economic Diversity of Sonoma Valley.

Most interview participants expressed an interest in workforce family housing that would integrate with the landscape and would be appropriately scaled. Many communicated a strong interest in future uses on SDC’s core campus that generate middle class,

professional jobs and higher education and vocational training opportunities that would help create a better jobs/housing balance and allow more families who work in Sonoma Valley to afford to live in the Valley.

Local Community Benefits. Many underscored the importance of ensuring public access and ongoing community interaction with SDC and its lands. Most participants strongly emphasized that future uses should focus on benefitting the local community. Many highlighted the importance of ensuring broad community support and involvement in future planning of the site.

SDC Potential Reuse Opportunities

In general, stakeholders support a diversity of uses on the core campus, and a historic district west of Arnold Drive. Most participants expressed a strong preference for the core campus to maintain its current development footprint and to avoid expansion or encroachment into open space. A few voiced a preference for the footprint to become smaller, particularly where buildings encroach on riparian corridors. All envisioned open space areas remaining public and being managed by the State or Regional Parks departments. Uses proposed for the core campus included:

- Educational and research opportunities;

- Mental health, health and human services, and developmentally disabled services;
- Agriculture and food production;
- Business incubator and innovation hub;
- Housing;
- Performing arts spaces and artists' studios;
- A non-profit hub;
- Historical preservation and interpretation;
- Diversified, appropriately scaled tourism.

Undeveloped portions of the site were embraced for continuation and enhancement of recreational use, and for preservation of habitat and natural resources.

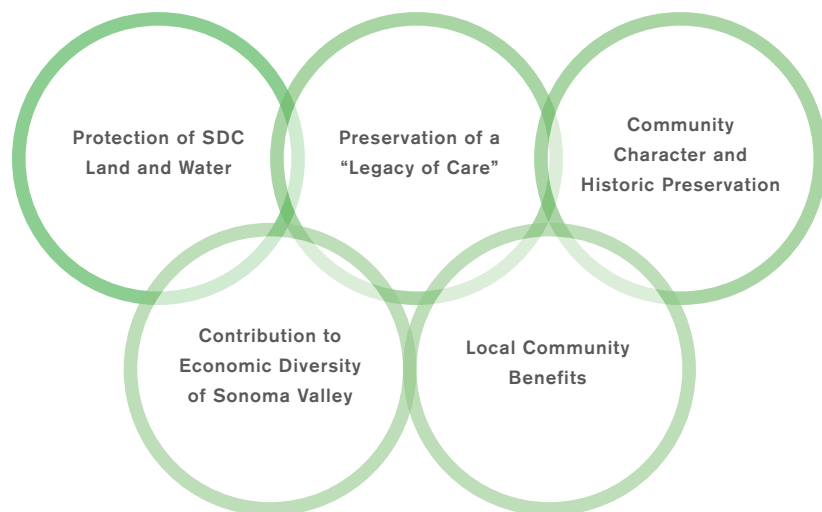
Issues and Concerns

Stakeholders identified several key issues facing Sonoma Valley. These included a lack of affordable/workforce family housing; a lack of middle-class, professional jobs; a lack of higher educational opportunities; an excess of vacation rentals, second home ownership and luxury tourism; groundwater depletion; and traffic, particularly on weekends.

Stakeholders also raised a number of concerns related to the future of SDC. These included: fear that the State would “surplus” all or portions of the property; excessive development density and its potential impacts on wildlife, traffic, and scenic values; development of exclusive estate housing; encroachment on open space; impacts of recreational use on sensitive ecological areas; expansion of luxury-oriented tourism; allowance of water resources to be used off-site; and closure of the mental health Crisis Center (Northern Star) and all Developmentally Disabled services at SDC.

Figure 3-1

FOUNDATIONAL RECURRING THEMES



3.2 Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Workshops

Two Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings anchored the first phase of the effort. Each workshop was organized around a set of critical components of the analysis.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #1

The first Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting took place at the SDC site on September 28, 2017. The Consultant team presented a summary of stakeholder conversations held during the summer, and preliminary findings from the site assessment, including hydrological and ecological characteristics; historical development; methodology for evaluating building condition; and infrastructure assessment; and economic context. CAC members offered comments on those findings, and worked in small groups to discuss implications for the future of the SDC site. Key themes of stakeholder responses with regard to conservation; recreation; reuse and infrastructure; and disposition and governance are summarized here.

KEY THEMES

Conservation

- Protect existing open space with a focus on ecological resources and an awareness that the wildlife corridor represents a significant ecological asset; establish ecological buffers and riparian corridor protection; protect and enhance open space within developed footprint.

- Understand that community ethos of environmental protection will limit/inform choices for reuse and development; establish basis for the economic value of conservation; utilize financing tools and housing to help fund conservation.
- Keep public water rights public; capture and store runoff water in local aquifers.
- Ensure that place informs use and use informs place; apply to future uses the historical analysis which illustrate that the serenity/open space was designed intentionally for therapeutic value.

Recreation

- Maintain and enhance recreational features of the property (e.g., Camp Via, ropes course, lakes, trails, ball fields, etc.) realizing that the SDC campus is used extensively by the local community and tourists for recreation; establish appropriately located trails, removing trails that impact creeks and wildlife corridor and enhance environmentally sensitive trails.
- Align SDC future uses with outdoor recreation initiative from the Sonoma County Economic Development Board to promote the area for recreation capitalizing on agriculture and tourism as big economic drivers in the county.
- Connect to adjacent parks, including the possible annexation by State Parks of the upper part of the SDC campus and County Regional Parks for other parts of the campus.
- Gain better understanding of current uses of SDC recreational assets (i.e., who, what, where, why, how often).

Reuse and Infrastructure

- Establish a complete, sustainable campus that includes sustainability guidelines for development, creates a mixed-income, mixed-use community to include affordable and market-rate housing in compact areas to reduce costs and to support open space and wildlife corridor, capitalizing on Sonoma's recognized leadership in conservation, and preserving the historic features of the campus, as much as is feasible.
- Maximize the on-site use of water and direct surplus water to benefit Sonoma Valley. If existing water infrastructure is retained, evaluate the domestic water system's value for institutional use, address water supply access, rights and governance, maximize potential to improve water and energy footprint on the campus.
- Retain legacy of community care by including treatment facilities, educational uses, social services, housing for developmentally disabled or a placement center of last resort.
- Use Enhanced Infrastructure Finance District as a tool (EIFDs) for infrastructure financing in combination with other tools, such as using housing to create a tax increment, and support from the County's general fund.

Disposition and Governance

Maintain "local" control over ultimate disposition and use of site and establish a governance structure that meets the needs of the local community and the State.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #2

The second CAC meeting took place on March 22, 2018. At this meeting, the Director of the California Department of General Services (DGS) addressed the Committee, re-stating commitment to the community-engaged process; reporting that DGS is also in communication with other State departments and public entities that have expressed interest in SDC; and noting that the County will also have an important role.

The Consultant Team briefly addressed the effects of the October 2017 Nuns Fire, and presented the assessment of site infrastructure, building systems and estimated order-of-magnitude costs to rehabilitate or replace buildings and infrastructure. The transportation context was summarized; agricultural suitability of the site was evaluated; and economic considerations of site transition to a new use were described. The Team presented a preliminary analysis of opportunities and constraints based on all of this analysis. In a breakout session, CAC members provided feedback on those opportunities and constraints, and provided input into a process and outcomes that could achieve both the State's and stakeholders' priorities. Feedback from stakeholders is summarized below.

Different Processes and Outcomes for Different Parts of the Campus

Some stakeholders proposed that there should be an approach that would allow agencies with the greatest interest and expertise in specific opportunities to plan for different areas of the campus. For example, portions of the property could be transferred to State Parks and Regional Parks, and open space preservation for those areas could move forward independently of other parts of the site. The campus core could be transitioned to the County Jurisdiction for more intensive planning. While this approach could put open space preservation on a faster track, there was concern about maintaining a community-driven process that would result in a good overall outcome if components were dealt with separately.

Housing Mix

Stakeholders imagined a campus core that could include a mix of new residential and adaptively reused buildings. There was a desire to include a mix of housing at all levels of the economic spectrum. One stakeholder raised the question of whether fire recovery should be integrated into the SDC site reuse planning effort.

Balancing Agriculture and Wildlife

Stakeholders voiced a clear concern for ecological preservation and performance. Stakeholders proposed that future development should preserve wildlife corridors and achieve "net zero" greenhouse gas emissions. Representatives of the SDC Coalition's Land Committee noted that they had worked since 2012 toward protection of the wildlife corridor at SDC. They emphasized the importance of riparian corridors and greenways for wildlife movement, and identified a need to more thoughtfully mesh our analysis of wildlife movement and agricultural suitability. At the time of this writing, the SDC Coalition was close to completing a recommendation for lands most appropriate for transfer to State and County agencies for park and open space preservation. (SDC Coalition is an advocacy group and does not have authority of transfer of SDC land).

Historic Preservation

Stakeholders from the Glen Ellen Historical Society emphasized the importance of preserving the historical record at SDC. The artifacts, books, materials gathered here over the century need to be explored and studied. The Historical Society would like to work with the consulting Team on historical determinations about artifacts that need to be preserved, recorded and stored. The group envisions a memorial park at the cemetery, and interpretation of artifacts in a preserved building on the site that would be used as a museum.

A representative from the Parent Hospital Association reflected that it is essential to preserve the human story of SDC, to value the many lives that have been lived here. This story may be best told using a residential building, even one that may not otherwise be considered “historic.”

Preserving Glen Ellen's Character

Representatives of Glen Ellen Forum emphasized the importance of the low-density residential context of Glen Ellen. Any future reuse of the SDC site should be compatible with that context, and benefit the community. One stakeholder emphasized the importance of ensuring that future development use downward-facing lighting and otherwise minimize light pollution, both for the scenic value and to minimize impacts on wildlife.

Maintaining a Prominent Role for the Community

Glen Ellen Forum members reported that they represented 700-some community members and were determined to be proactive in planning for the future of the SDC site. The Forum wants assurance that the campus will be reused in a way that demonstrates good faith with the community, and wants to be a driver in the process. Representatives reported that they favor a Presidio Trust-style governance entity (“Eldridge Trust”?) that would give community members a clear mechanism to foster and define their values they want to see expressed at the site. A Trust could be created in the short-term, and could plan for the site in a realistic timeframe.

3.3 Community Meeting

A community workshop was held on Saturday, June 23 at the Hanna Boys Center. The workshop was convened by the Department of General Services (DGS), the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), and the planning team to share findings from the existing conditions assessment and to gather feedback from the community.

Workshop participants provided verbal comments during the Q & A and the Gallery Walk, where presentation boards were stationed around the venue with consulting team members available for discussion and to answer questions. Participants also submitted written comments via comment cards and by email. The following summarizes all public input received by the WRT team.

LAND + WATER

Consistent with the stakeholder assessment findings and input from the CAC, many workshop participants expressed an interest in protecting SDC land and water and ensuring future public access.

- Many participants expressed that SDC open space lands should be transferred immediately to State and Regional Parks and be separated from the redevelopment planning process for the core campus. One participant suggested that local environmental groups and the Coalition have not articulated why it is a good idea to transfer these lands when Parks have limited resources to effectively manage their existing lands.

- Some saw the wisdom of linking in one plan the redevelopment and the disposition of lands. However, some questioned DGS' preference to do so, expressing that decoupling the open space lands from redevelopment of the core campus would reduce community uncertainty and concern.
- One participant underscored the importance of including in the report a discussion of how the SDC site fits into the community and surrounding lands and how the surrounding land uses place constraints on new development.
- Many participants articulated that active and passive recreational opportunities abound. Several were concerned that some recreational activities may not be consistent with conservation goals in Zone C (see Chapter 9).
- Many respondents asserted that vineyards and resorts on SDC would not be supported by the community.

ECOLOGY

Several respondents emphasized the importance of the wildlife corridor specifying that future development should not negatively impact habitat values and, if possible, should enhance the ecological value of the property. Some suggested that redevelopment should be guided by an ecological or sustainability framework, including the use of renewable energy. One commented that farming could compromise water resources on the site.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Many commented that the tranquility of SDC is a value that must be preserved and is a matter of cultural importance to the community. Several commented that the cemetery, in particular, should be preserved, and the site's redevelopment should include a museum telling the story of the history of treatment of people with mental illness and developmental disabilities. Many commented that Camp Via should be preserved. One respondent suggested that a redevelopment plan should address how prehistorical resources will be protected and another asserted that people with developmental disabilities must be included in decision-making about future uses. One commented that housing on the SDC site would conflict with the historical and cultural preservation of the site. Still others call for continuing intellectual and disability services and housing on campus.

BUILDING SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Overall, participants expressed appreciation for the robust analysis of the building systems and infrastructure. However, one respondent suggested that not enough time was dedicated to analyzing building condition. Another suggested that a university would be a cost-effective single user on the core campus, particularly in light of the current centralized infrastructure and the significant and expensive upgrades that will

be required. One suggested that existing buildings could be ranked according to cost of rehabilitation and then consider demolishing many expensive buildings that do not have essential historical preservation value. One respondent suggested that building higher density in strategic areas could enhance habitat and open space.

ECONOMY

Many commented that tourism-centered luxury resorts and wineries would diminish the quality of life for surrounding communities. Many acknowledge the need for affordable housing. Some expressed concerns about housing density on the site, noting potential impacts like traffic and crime. Others said that any housing development should be located away from Arnold Drive. Several specified that a State university and other public uses are most appropriate for this site. Some commented that establishing a farm for food production would meet the needs of the community and would reflect the historical uses of the land. Many respondents called for the interim use of the property in the immediate term, particularly for affordable housing.

FACTORS AFFECTING REUSE

- Many expressed concerns about the traffic study and questioned the accuracy of the associated methods, assumptions, and conclusions. Many suggested that a study needs to analyze traffic impacts associated with different reuse scenarios that are consistent with the other priorities and values identified by the community, such as preserving the scenic values along Arnold Drive.
- Several commented that the assessment does not include data associated with impacts of various reuse options and that an evaluation of the scope of a potential reuse program is a necessary next step that should include a larger, more inclusive community discussion beyond the existing CAC.
- Several commented that the condition of infrastructure is a major factor affecting reuse.
- One participant asserted that some of the conclusions related to the zone analysis of the site assessment may prematurely restrict potential reuse alternatives.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Many expressed their appreciation for the completion of a comprehensive site assessment that effectively included community feedback which instills confidence in the planning process.
- Many urged the State to allow for immediate, interim uses of the site, noting the social, financial, and security benefits of maintaining continuous uses. In order to understand the immediate interim reuse potential of the site, one respondent suggested that the report should identify reuse potential for interim uses, including which buildings could be used for temporary occupancy for either residential or commercial uses.
- Some responded that it was difficult to provide meaningful comments without the benefit of seeing the full assessment report.
- One commented that there is no mention of a No Action alternative, suggesting that the State could decide not to do anything with the land.
- Some commented that many local voices will be needed to support the next phase of planning. One responded that people with disabilities have been represented by the Parents Hospital Association and the Lanterman Coalition but that it is essential to hear the voices of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in their communities and to ensure that the disability community benefits from the future uses at SDC.

